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From Practicum to Real Classroom: Does Experience Change Perceived Self-efficacy Beliefs of English Language Teachers?

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Abstract: The present study aimed to explore the changes in the perceived self-efficacy beliefs of English language teachers over a four-year period, from pre-service through in-service. With that aim in mind, the study aimed to shed light on the differences the actual teaching experience might create on the self-efficacy perceptions of EFL teachers. The data for the study were collected through The Turkish Version of The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale adapted from Çapa, et al. (2005). The scale was administered three times: before and after practicum and after four years of actual teaching experience. The findings of the study indicated a gradual increase in the participants' efficacy levels in classroom management and instructional strategies over the course of time. However, the increase after four years of teaching was found to be more prevalent and remarkable. **Keywords:** Self-efficacy, Teacher education, Practicum, Teachers' self-efficacy, Teacher experience.

Introduction

One of the most fundamental aims of teacher education programs is to empower future teachers and to train them as competent and confident teachers of the future. It takes a comprehensive curriculum and dedicated teacher educators to raise teachers who are fully equipped professionally, who are aware of their potential, and who perceive themselves as efficacious teachers. Throughout their education, pre-service English language teachers (hereafter, PSELTs) gradually develop efficacy expectations of themselves; "an efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p.193). According to Bandura and Adams (1977), one of the fundamental roots of self-efficacy expectations is "performance accomplishments"; through such performance, individuals are informed about what they can and cannot do. But the question is whether the actual teaching experience agrees with the efficacy expectations of teacher candidates regarding how they perceive themselves as teachers. The correlation can go both ways; teacher candidates who have high perceived self-efficacy (hereafter, PSE) might end up lowering their perceptions, or those who have low PSE in the first place might raise their idea of how efficacious they are as teachers.

Therefore, the impact of teaching experience on the PSE of novice teachers is always a curious topic of research, and findings of such research might contribute positively to the empowerment of teachers.

According to Wyatt (2018), teachers' self-efficacy has been a frequently studied subject for several decades now; however, studies focusing on the self-efficacy of language teachers are relatively new. Wyatt (2018) suggests that such studies have become much common in the last 16 years or so. The reason for such a booming interest in self-efficacy beliefs of foreign language teachers might be the challenges imposed on foreign language teachers such as their doubting themselves regarding their own linguistic competence, pronunciation, fluency in the language they teach (Wyatt, 2018). There are now numerous studies in the literature which focused on self-efficacy beliefs of English language teachers (e.g., Aslan-Yazıcı, 2019; Balcı et al., 2019; Genç et al., 2016; Kaygısız et al., 2018; Tavi, 2014;). A considerable majority of these studies investigated the PSE of PSELTs during their education; some of such studies focused on the impact of various factors such as teaching experience, English proficiency level and institutional policies on PSE while others focused on the effects of PSE on such factors as self-reported English proficiency levels and teaching practices.

Tavi (2014) investigated the correlation between self-reflection and self-efficacy of PSELTs during their Practicum Course, using EFL Teacher Efficacy Scale before and after the practicum as part of an experimental study. The study attempted to analyze the impact of reflective journals on the efficacy beliefs of PSELTs and concluded that writing reflective e-journals significantly increased the self-efficacy levels of the participants. Another study on the self-efficacy beliefs of PSELTs was conducted by Balcı et al. (2019). In their descriptive study, the researchers analyzed the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service English language learners throughout the four years of the program and aimed to find out whether PSE differed by class level. The results revealed high levels of PSE among all the participants. As for the difference between class levels, the researchers found a significant difference between the PSE levels of sophomores and juniors in favor of juniors; however, contrary to the expectations of the researchers, no significant difference was found between other class levels. Chacón (2005) investigated self-efficacy beliefs of English language teachers in Venezuela through The Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale and the correlations between PSE and self-reported English proficiency. Her results showed a significant correlation between the two; the study also concluded that the teachers felt more efficacious about instructional strategies than student engagement and classroom management. In a similar study, Aslan-Yazıcı (2019) studied the impact of self-efficacy beliefs of English language teachers working in state high schools on their teaching practices and the correlations between the participants' self-reported proficiency levels and teacher efficacy. The results of the study revealed positive correlations between self-reported proficiency and teacher efficacy and a high correlation between teachers' self-efficacy levels and their teaching performance.

Self-efficacy beliefs, like all other beliefs, are prone to change, and as was suggested by Wyatt (2018), “teachers’ self-beliefs are fluid and context sensitive” (p. 93). In comparison with the considerable number of studies on English language teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, there is relatively a limited number of studies that particularly focus on the changes in the self-efficacy beliefs of English language teachers (e.g., Atay, 2007; Ma et al., 2021; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; Swanson, 2013). Atay (2007) investigated the impact of one-year long practicum on teacher efficacy of Turkish PSELTs and the factors that influence the level of such efficacy. The study employed TSES, administered two times before and after the practicum. Although the study did not yield statistically significant results regarding overall efficacy, the results regarding subscales revealed a significant difference between pre-practicum and post-practicum scores, especially the resulting efficacy scores in instructional strategies and efficacy in student engagement. The study revealed a significant decrease in the participants’ PSE in instructional strategies while there found to be a significant increase in the scores of the other two subscales, classroom management and student engagement. Hoang and Wyatt (2021) also investigated the development of pre-service EFL teachers’ beliefs over their practicum in the Vietnamese context. They found out that the practicum experience fostered the development of the self-efficacy beliefs of the pre-service EFL teachers; yet they did not find enough evidence for increased self-efficacy beliefs with regards to contexts and domains peculiar to what EFL teachers do. They concluded from the finding that more ELT-related support in areas such as continuing professional development and assessment should be provided for pre-service EFL teachers during their practicum. Akbari and Moradkhani (2010) compared the PSE levels of novice and experienced teachers of English as a foreign language. They did not follow the efficacy development of the same group of teachers; instead, they used two different groups of teachers. The experienced group of participants comprised of teachers with three years of teaching experience. The study concluded that experienced teachers had higher levels of global efficacy. Swanson (2013) conducted a quantitative study on the changes in foreign language teacher efficacy and administered TSES to a group of 47 foreign language teachers twice: first nearly at the beginning of the teacher education program and second after one year of teaching experience after graduation from the program. The study found out that the participants were highly confident regarding their abilities to teach languages before they started taking courses in the teacher education program; however, after one year of teaching experience their confidence in motivating students and fostering interest in learning were found to be areas they were least confident about. Swanson (2013) concluded that training teachers in teacher education programs should be more than equipping them solely with content knowledge.

There is a limited number of studies in the literature that focus on the changes in the PSE beliefs of PSELTs, and most of such studies in the literature observed changes over a relatively short period of time,

throughout pre-service education. There seems to be no longitudinal study that focused on what happens over an extended period of teaching experience regarding the changes in the PSE of English language teachers. The present study aims to explore the changes in the PSE beliefs of English language teachers over four years. To that end, the study intends to shed light on the changes that four years of actual teaching experience might create on the self-efficacy perceptions of EFL teachers. With that aim in mind, the study intends to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does practicum change the PSE beliefs of PSELTs?
2. To what extent does 3 or 4 years of teaching experience change the PSE beliefs of English language teachers?

Methodology

Design

The present study is a longitudinal study which aims to investigate whether experience makes a change in the PSE beliefs of English language teachers. The study employed a mixed methods research design. The quantitative data were collected through a 24-item scale; the Turkish version of the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (hereafter TTSES) adopted from Çapa et al. (2005). The scale was conducted three times; first in October 2017, second in May 2018, and finally in September 2021. The qualitative data for the study were collected through one open-ended question to get more details about the PSE beliefs and to be able to elaborate more on the effects of four years of teaching experience on the PSE beliefs of the participants.

Setting

The first part of the study was conducted at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year in the English Language Teaching Program of Gazi University, Ankara. The English Language Teaching programs in Turkey are four-year education programs which offer general language skills and methodology courses in the first three years and a one-year long practicum in the final year. The Practicum Course requires senior PSELTs to attend and observe actual classes for four hours a week in a state-run school in the first semester and to observe and teach at least one class hour every week in the second semester. The scale used to collect data was first administered before the participants started the practicum, and the second administration of the scale was done at the end of the practicum course, before the participants graduated from the program. The graduates of the program are certified to work as English language teachers, if they choose to do so. When they start working as teachers, they do not necessarily get any official follow-up mentorship; their professional development is based on trial-and-error, personal efforts, and

hopefully guidance from senior fellow teachers. The third and final part of the study was conducted in 2021, when most of the participants have had 3 to 4 years of teaching experience in different schools, such as private or state primary and high schools or universities.

Participants

At the onset of the study, in 2017, the participants comprised of 12 senior students studying at the English Language Teaching Program of Gazi University, Ankara. Of the participants, 11 were female and one was male. All the participants were assigned to the same educator in the department, but they were assigned to two different mentor teachers in two groups of six in the practice school. The first set of data was collected from the 12 participants at the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year right before they started the practicum course. At the end of the academic year, all the participants graduated from the program successfully. The second set of data was collected from the same 12 participants in the last week of the academic year, in May 2018. Almost four years after their graduation, all twelve participants were contacted through email, and they were asked to respond to the same scale one last time to collect the third and last set of data. Of the twelve participants, eight responded to the scale; one of the participants, the only male participant in the original group, reported that he had not had any teaching experience whatsoever after graduation, and the remaining three participants did not reply to the email. All in all, the final data for the study were collected from eight participants.

All the eight participants in the final set were female. Their ages ranged between 24 (12.5%) and 26 (62.5%). As for experience, three of the eight participants (37.5%) reported they had been teaching for four years; four of them (50%) had been teaching for three years; one of the participants (12.5%) said she had been teaching for three months. Of the eight participants, four (50%) were working at a state-run school, and the remaining four were working at a private school during the data collection process. Regarding the type of schools, five participants (62.5%) said they worked at a high school, two (25%) worked at a university, and one (12.5%) worked at a primary school. As for their educational status, five participants (62.5%) reported they were holding a B.A. degree, and three participants (37.5%) were pursuing an M.A. degree at the time of data collection.

Instrument

The data for the study were collected through a 24-item scale; the Turkish version of the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TTSES) adopted from Çapa et al. (2005). The TTSES is the translated version of The Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and the overall reliability coefficient of the TTSES was .93.

The TTSES is composed of 24 items designed to obtain data about three sub-categories: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. The scale comprised of five main categories of rating (*none at all, very little, some degree, quite a bit, and a great deal*); the participants responded to each item using 9-point Likert type responses (a great deal = 9, none at all = 1). In the first two stages of the data collection procedure, the scale (TTSES) was given to participants as it was. In the third and final data collection stage, two additional parts were added to the scale: One of those parts included questions to collect demographic information considering the fact that the demography of the participants changed during four years after their graduation. The questions inquired about years of teaching experience, the kind of institutions the participants were working in, and the latest educational status of the participants, all of which were assumed to be factors which might affect the PSE of the participants. The second additional part included one open-ended question:

What are the differences between your perceived self-efficacy in your senior year at university as a teacher candidate and your perceived self-efficacy now as a teacher with 3 to 4 years of teaching experience? Please, explain briefly.

The open-ended question was formulated by the researcher with the help of one expert from the field of teacher education. The question was formulated in Turkish since it was believed that the participants would express their opinions more effectively in their mother tongue, and it aimed to collect more detailed data about the self-efficacy perceptions of the participants as teachers with experience.

Data collection procedures

The present study intended to collect data about the PSE levels of novice English language teachers comparing their beliefs about their own efficacy prior to and after actual teaching experience. Therefore, the data collection process was three-fold; before practicum, after practicum and finally after four years of teaching experience.

In 2017, the participants were first given the EFL Teacher Efficacy Scale which was developed by Chiang (2008), and which contained 30 items requiring respondents to provide answers using a 3-point Likert scale as *I agree, I can't decide, and I disagree*. The results obtained from the scale were confusing since almost all the obtained responses fell into the *I agree* column in the scale. It was speculated that the three categories of responses on the scale were not precise enough for the purposes of the study; also, responding to a scale in the foreign language might have created a barrier for the respondents. As a result, the participants were asked to answer the TTSES, and the data obtained from the EFL Teacher Efficacy Scale were excluded from the study.

The TTSES was administered to the twelve participants of the study before and after the practicum to see whether the practicum would make a difference in their perceptions of self-efficacy; all twelve participants

responded to the scale. Then in 2021, the twelve participants were contacted through email, and they were asked to respond to the scale again. Of the participants, eight answered the scale. Therefore, the final number of participants turned out to be eight.

Data analysis

The primary data collected for the study were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The demographic information about the participants was described in percentages, which provided quantitative data. The quantitative data, although limited, were used to shed more light on the qualitative analysis of the data obtained through the scale.

The responses of the participants to the scale itself were tabulated to see the changes in the responses over time. The responses showing an increase or a decrease in the ratings of the same item were identified and marked on the table. Each statement in the scale falls into one of the three sub-categories as efficacy in student engagement (*items 1,2,4,6,9,12,14, and 22*), efficacy in instructional strategies (*items 7,10,11,17,18,20,23, and 24*), and efficacy in classroom management (*items 3,5,8,13,15,16,19, and 21*). The identified changes were analyzed and interpreted according to the sub-categories.

As part of the final data collection stage, the participants were also given one open-ended question to get a deeper understanding of the results of data analysis. The question, which inquired about the self-reported differences in the PSE beliefs of the participants over the four years, was constructed as an open-ended one to allow a free range of topics and comments in the responses of the participants. The responses of the participants were read thoroughly and analyzed based on the same sub-categories as in the TTSES: *classroom management*, *student engagement* and *instructional strategies*. One additional category was added in order to analyze other points of discussion emerging in the responses of the participants and that category was named *other*. The responses the participants provided were then interpreted and discussed according to the categories listed above and in relation to the research questions.

Results

In this section, the findings of the study obtained by means of TTSES and the open-ended question in the survey were presented in line with the research questions.

Research question 1: To what extent does practicum change the PSE beliefs of pre-service English language teachers.

Research question 1 inquired whether the one-year Practicum Course would change the PSE beliefs of PSELTs. To detect the changes and the direction of the changes, the participants' ratings of each item were

tabulated, and the increases and decreases in the responses were identified. The cases when one item was rated in the same way in both steps were marked as *no change*.

The items in the scale are analyzed according to the sub-categories they belong to as *Efficacy in Student Engagement*, *Efficacy in Instructional Strategies*, and *Efficacy in Classroom Management* as determined by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The results have revealed that the increases in the PSE beliefs seem to be more prevalent in the classroom management category, which might be interpreted as the impact of the experience in an actual classroom. The theoretical background that the PSELTs were equipped with might have understandably made them feel confident about the use of instructional strategies and student engagement. None of the participants rated their PSE as *none at all*, which might be considered a clear sign that they were confident in their potential as teacher candidates as senior students. Most of the answers ranged between *some degree* and *a great deal*.

Regarding *Efficacy in Student Engagement*, most of the participants reported a moderate to high level of PSE. Item 1, which was about how much they can get through to the most difficult students, was rated as *quite a bit* or *a great deal* by most of the participants, and the responses after the practicum did not change remarkably; the slight change in the answers showed an increase in all the responses. The responses regarding fostering critical thinking in students seemed to be evenly distributed. Some participants reported an increase, and some others a decrease in their PSE. One of the participants rated her PSE as *quite a bit* before Practicum, but after Practicum she rated the same item as *a great deal*. Another participant, on the other hand, reported a decrease from *quite a bit* to *some degree*. For Item 4, which was about motivating students, three of the participants reported an increase, three reported a decrease in their PSE. A majority of the participants reported no change in their PSE as far as how much they can get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork. While six of the participants reported no change, the remaining two participants reported an increase. The responses of the participants ranged between *a little* and *a great deal*. This finding might suggest that the practicum experience did not make much of a change in how much the participants believed they could foster self-belief in students. It seems that half of the participants reported an increase in their PSE regarding how much they can help their students value learning. However, it should be noted that the reported increases were not remarkable increases in that most of the responses fell into the same efficacy criteria in the scale. For Item 12, which was about fostering students' creativity, half of the participants reported no change; two participants reported a decrease, but the decrease was only by one point, which did not change the category the response fell into. Two participants reported an increase in their PSE regarding Item 12. One of them rated her PSE as *some degree* before practicum, but she rated the same item as *a great deal* after the practicum. The last item in the sub-category was about efficacy in assisting families in helping their children do well at school.

Most of the responses showed a decrease in PSE. One participant, for instance, rated her PSE for Item 22 as *quite a bit* before the practicum, but after the practicum she rated her PSE for the same item as *very little*. Considering all eight items in the Efficacy in Student Engagement sub-category, the rates of increase, decrease, and no change in the PSE beliefs were found to be 30%, 25%, and 45%, respectively.

The second sub-category included eight items about *Efficacy in Instructional Strategies*. The responses to some of the items in this category yielded remarkable results. Item 10, which was about how much they can determine whether a student comprehended what they have taught, most of the participants reported no change. The responses to the item ranged between *quite a bit* and *a great deal*. It can be claimed that one-year practicum experience confirmed the participants' PSE beliefs regarding Item 10. For Item 11, which inquired about the extent to which they could craft good questions for their students, none of the participants reported a decrease. Half of the participants reported an increase while the other half reported that there was no change in their PSE beliefs. All the reported increases were by two points. To illustrate, one of the participants rated her PSE before the practicum as *some degree* and after the practicum as *quite a bit*. About the teacher's ability to provide alternative explanations or examples when students are confused, none of the participants reported an increase while five of them stated there was a decrease in their PSE. Still, it should be noted that the decreases were not dramatic; the ratings of the participants dropped by one point, which did not necessarily change the rating category they fell into. For Item 23, the responses ranged between *some degree* and *a great deal*, and except for one participant, all participants stuck to their responses before the practicum. All in all, for all eight items in the Efficacy in Instructional Strategies sub-category, the rates of increase, decrease, and no change in PSE were found to be 23%, 20%, and 57%, respectively.

The final sub-category was *Efficacy in Classroom Management*. For the first two items in the category, Item 3 and Item 5, half of the participants reported an increase in their PSE beliefs. The ratings for Item 3 ranged between *very little* and *a great deal*, and for Item 5 between *some degree* and *a great deal*. As for Item 8, which was about establishing routines to run activities smoothly, half of the participants reported a decrease. Those who reported a decrease in their PSE regarding Item 8 decreased their ratings by one point. Item 13 was about encouraging students to follow classroom rules. The responses before the practicum ranged between *some degree* to *a great deal*. After the practicum, two of the participants increased their ratings; two other participants reported a decrease, and four (half) of the participants did not change their responses at all. One participant, for example, rated her PSE for Item 13 as *some degree* before and after the practicum, which might suggest that one-year practicum experience failed to have an impact on the PSE beliefs of the participant. More than half of the participants reported no change in their PSE beliefs regarding Item 15, which was about calming disruptive or noisy students. Most of the responses in the no- change category ranged between *some*

degree and *quite a bit*, which might indicate that the practicum experience did not support the participants about how to deal with disruptive students. Considering the rates of increases, decreases, and no changes for the eight items in the sub-category of Efficacy in Classroom Management were found to be 35%, 25%, and 40%, respectively.

All in all, the results obtained from the scale administered before and after the practicum showed a moderate number of increases, decreases, and no changes. However, regarding the resulting percentages of the responses obtained from each sub-category, it can be clearly seen that the highest percentage in each belonged to the 'no change' column. The second sub-category, Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, did not seem to be very much influenced by the practicum experience. This might be interpreted as a clear sign that the practicum experience failed to make a considerable effect on the PSE beliefs of the PSELTs. The most prevalent rate of increase was found in the sub-category of Efficacy in Classroom Management, which might be considered plausible since the practicum experience was probably the first time when the participants had to manage a real class. Also, of all the sub-categories, Classroom Management might be said to be the most challenging one in terms of putting theoretical knowledge into practice. Although individual participants reported increases and decreases in their PSE beliefs after the practicum experience, the overall impact of the practicum experience seems to be limited.

Research question 2: To what extent does 3 or 4 years of teaching experience change the PSE beliefs of English language teachers?

Research question 2 aimed to explore whether four years of teaching experience would change the PSE beliefs of PSELTs. With that aim in mind, the responses of the participants to the TTSES as senior students before the Practicum Course and the responses they provided four years after their graduation as English language teachers were tabulated. The responses were analyzed in the same manner as in the analysis of Research Question 1; the items in the scale were categorized according to the sub-categories determined by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001).

A quick look at the tabulated results shows a clear and remarkable dominance of increases in the ratings of the participants of their PSE beliefs after the actual teaching experience. Decreases, on the other hand, seem to be more prevalent in the sub-category of Efficacy in Student Engagement, which might be interpreted as a mismatch between expected PSE before any teaching experience and after three or four years of teaching experience.

In the sub-category of Efficacy in Student Engagement, more than half of the participants reported an increase in their PSE regarding how much they can foster critical thinking in the classroom. Most of the reported increases are remarkable in that they increased by 2 to 4 points. One of the participants, who has been working at a state high school for almost three years, rated her PSE for Item 2 as *some degree* before practicum, and her

response changed to *a great deal* after the teaching experience. Similarly, another participant, who has been working at a private university for four years, increased her rating of *quite a bit* to *a great deal* after the teaching experience. However, the changes of ratings for Item 4, which was about motivating students with low interest, seemed to be the other way around. More than half of the participants reported a decrease in their PSE for the item. Most of the reported decreases were by one or two points; One participant, who has been working at a private high school for four years, decreased her PSE for the item by three points, from *a great deal* to *some degree*. The responses for Item 6 and Item 12 yielded no change in the ratings of more than half of the participants. The items inquired about getting students to believe in themselves and fostering student creativity, respectively. The responses to the items in the first step were already high, ranging mostly between *quite a bit* and *a great deal*, and the fact that the participants stuck to their original ratings might suggest that the teaching experience lived up to their self-efficacy expectations they had at the beginning of their senior year at university. For Item 14 and Item 22, half of the participants reported a decrease in their PSE. Except for one participant, the reported decreases were by one point. That participant, who has been working at a state high school for three years, decreased her rating for Item 14 from *quite a bit* to *very little*. All in all, the rates of increase, decrease, and no change were found to be 34%, 34%, and 32%, respectively.

The second sub-category, Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, yielded more increases

than decreases or no changes. Except for two items, Items 20 and 24, half of the participants increased their PSE ratings. Most of the increases were by one point. One participant, who has been working at a state high school, increased her rating of the item from *quite a bit* to *a great deal*. For Item 20, half of the participants did not change their ratings, which already ranged between *quite a bit* and *a great deal* in the first set of responses to the scale. One participant, though, decreased her rating of the item from *quite a bit* to *some degree*. For Item 24, only one of the participants reported an increase; more than half of the participants responded to the item with the same rating (*quite a bit*) as in the first attempt. Considering all the eight items in the sub-category, the rates of increase, decrease, and no change were calculated to be 45%, 22%, and 33%, respectively.

The final sub-category, Efficacy in Classroom Management, yielded more increased ratings of all. And in this sub-category, none of the participants decreased their ratings for 3 of the items: Item 3, controlling disruptive behavior in the classroom; Item 13, getting children to follow classroom rules; and Item 15, calming a disruptive or noisy student. It seems the participants became more confident, and therefore more efficacious with experience over the course of time. For Item 3, six of the participants increased their rating of PSE, and two reported no change in their PSE. The participants who did not change their responses rated their PSE as *some degree*. The reported increases might be considered

remarkable in that the increases were by two to four points. One of the participants, who has been working at a state university for three years, increased her rating from *some degree* to *a great deal*. For Item 8, a great majority of the participants (seven) reported an increase in their PSE, while only one participant reported a decrease. Half of the reported increases were by two points, which changed the rating category. The results for Item 13 did not yield any decreases; more than half of the participants increased their ratings of PSE. One participant increased her rating of PSE for the item from *some degree* to *a great deal*. Similarly, the responses for Item 15 did not yield any decreases. More than half of the participants increased their ratings, and three participants stuck to their original ratings. The increases were by one or two points. For Item 16, which was about establishing a classroom management system with groups of students, more than half of the participants reported an increase, and two of the participants decreased their ratings by one point. For Item 19 and Item 21, half of the participants reported an increase. One participant, for example, increased her rating for the item from *some degree* to *a great deal*. Another participant, on the other hand, reported a dramatic decrease in her PSE; she decreased her rating from *a great deal* to *some degree*. The same participant decreased her rating of Item 21 from *a great deal* to *very little* after the actual teaching experience. All in all, the rates of increase, decrease, and no change for the sub-category of Efficacy in Classroom Management were estimated as 66%, 14%, and 20%, respectively.

Table 1
Resulting Percentages of the Changes in the PSE Beliefs

Change (%)	Increased PSE		Decreased PSE		No Change (%)	
	After the practicum	After 3-4 years of teaching	After the practicum	After 3-4 years of teaching	After the practicum	After 3-4 years of teaching
<i>Student Engagement</i>	30	34	25	34	45	32
<i>Instructional Strategies</i>	23	45	20	22	57	33
<i>Classroom Management</i>	35	66	25	14	40	20

As part of the final data collection stage, the participants were given one open-ended question to get a deeper understanding of the results of data analysis. The question was “What are the differences between your perceived self-efficacy in your senior year at university as a teacher candidate and your perceived self-efficacy now as a teacher with three to four years of teaching experience?”. The question was formulated in Turkish since it was believed that the participants would express their opinions more effectively in their mother tongue.

The responses of the participants were read in detail and analyzed according to the sub-categories in the TTSES and one additional

category for other emerging points of discussion: *classroom management*, *student engagement*, *instructional strategies*, and *other*. The responses the participants provided were then interpreted and discussed according to the categories listed above and in relation to the research questions.

Classroom management was one of the most prevalent topics of discussion in the responses of the participants. An overall look at the responses revealed that all the participants felt more confident and efficacious about their classroom management skills today as a teacher with experience than when they were PSELTs. All the participants reported that they found their own ways around their classroom management skills through experience, and that they were still looking for solutions as classroom management-related challenges came along. One participant reported that she had difficulty dealing with managing the classroom during her practicum experience and in the first year of teaching after graduation. She stated that she felt more confident after four years of teaching experience about classroom management issues such as setting rules or dealing with disruptive students, and that she is still developing professionally. Another participant stated that she came a long way as far as managing her classrooms is concerned, but she is still working on it to find better ways by trying alternative ideas of her own. From such suggestions, it might be concluded that in terms of efficacy in classroom management, there was an increase in the PSE beliefs of the participants after four years of teaching experience. As for the reasons for the increased PSE beliefs, several suggestions were made by the participants. All the participants wrote a few words or so about the differences between their practicum experience and actual teaching experience. Doing so, they mostly mentioned what was missing or lacking in the practicum rather than talking about how they benefitted from it. One participant talked about her theoretical knowledge of classroom management, and said she thought she would handle students with disruptive behavior using the knowledge background she gained at university. To her surprise, as was suggested by her, “none of that knowledge worked for (her) to communicate effectively with such students, which made (her) question (her) efficacy”. One other participant talked about the fact that they did not have the chance to work with students of different age groups during the practicum. In a typical Practicum Course, the PSETs go to the same schools in both semesters; they do not have the opportunity to teach different class levels. The participant reported that she became more efficacious as a result of the fact that the actual teaching experience gave her a chance to work with students of different age groups.

However, during my teaching experience, I had the chance to work with students of different age groups, and those of different special needs. My perception of my teaching efficacy developed positively.

The time constraint seemed to be another reason why the participants failed to manage classes effectively. Most participants stated that they

were not able to take ownership of the class since they spent little time at practice schools.

“...there was a lack of familiarity and bond between students and me. I could not determine classroom rules with them; I did not have enough experience... we were temporary in the school...”

The analysis of the data regarding efficacy in classroom management showed that the participants thought that their PSE beliefs changed for the better and that they felt more confident and aware about how they could manage their classrooms. It seems that the practicum experience made the participants question their classroom management skills, but it did not result in much of a development in that regard.

The second category of analysis was *Instructional Strategies*. One of the most interesting points mentioned by most of the participants was the correlation between the theoretical knowledge they learned in the ELT program and the actual practice in classrooms. One participant stated that she thought she could teach all her lessons in English, and she was quite confident about it during the practicum; however, when she started working as a teacher, she found out to her disappointment that it was not possible with certain groups of students. She also added that she had to teach so-called exam English during her first two years of teaching and that she was not trained for that kind of lesson content at university. Another participant reported that when she was preparing lesson plans for her lessons during the practicum, she would religiously follow the steps that she was taught in her methodology courses at university. Yet, she was not happy with the results after implementing the lesson plan in the class.

Especially, in vocabulary teaching there are certain techniques we apply such as concept-checking questions. It takes hours to prepare them, but the student wants to learn through another way. Not getting the feedback I expected made me sad. With experience I realized asking concept-checking questions was artificial. I found my way of doing things. I prepare lesson plans of my own, and I try not to include all the techniques I learned at university.

The time constraint during the practicum was reported to be also influential in terms of instructional strategies. The participants stated that they did not have ample time to get to know the students so that they could design activities accordingly.

“...since I could not get to know the students due to the limited time we got to spend together, so I could not design effective lessons for them”.

As for *Student Engagement*, the participants seem to have gained more confidence and awareness over the course of time. All the participants reported a change for the better in their efficacy regarding how to understand their students' needs and how to design lessons and activities accordingly. One participant stated that during her practicum experience she thought only those students who enjoy learning English would participate in activities, and by experience she came to realize that it all depended on the teacher's efforts to invoke interest in learning English.

Another participant reported that her teaching performance improved significantly, and she could easily identify low-achieving students and design activities for their needs. It can be understood from the responses of the participants that during the practicum they focused mostly on teaching the lesson rather than teaching students; that is, they tended to stick to the lesson plan and failed to engage most students in their class. They all reported that they improved their student engagement skills considerably and that they knew there was still room for improvement.

Now I know what I do is more than merely teaching English. Part of it is about adding something to their life experiences. I have tried to guide students who have lost their way about their life goals, although I feel I haven't been much successful.

The participants provided discussions about topics which did not fall into any of the above-mentioned categories, and those discussions were analyzed under the category "*other*". Most of the participants talked about their feelings during the practicum experience, comparing those feelings with how they feel today. Some of the participants wrote about the impact of being observed on their PSE beliefs. One participant stated that her overall PSE level was low during the practicum experience because, as she stated, "*we were constantly being observed*". Another participant stated that she could not help but feel as if she was being observed even when she was teaching her own class working as a teacher, and that she overcame the feeling through experience.

Now I can see my students as students; I used to feel they were observing me just like what my professors did during Practicum. I stopped doing that and showing off, so to speak.

I did not have enough experience, we were temporary in the school, and we were constantly being observed. Therefore, my PSE level was lower.

The practicum experience, although it seems to have given the participants an idea of what it would be like in a real classroom, might have failed to create a feeling of involvement on the part of the PSELTs in the present study. One participant stated that during the practicum she felt as if she were in virtual (unreal) classroom. Another participant reported that she did not feel much like a teacher during the practicum experience. However, as she had the chance to work with students of different age groups and different needs, she had a chance to gain a stronger perspective about her own teaching.

During Practicum, I did not feel efficacious since I could not quite grasp the seriousness of the profession, and since I could not get to know the students due to the limited time we spent together. However, during my teaching experience, I had the chance to work with students of different age groups, and those of different special needs. My perception of self-teaching efficacy developed positively.

Regarding their PSE beliefs then and now, all the participants might be said to have achieved to become their own person. One participant stated that her PSE beliefs were rather superficial during the practicum, but that superficiality was replaced by reality through experience. Another participant reported that she felt more efficacious after four years of teaching because of the responsibility she had undertaken and because of the difficulties she had successfully overcome. All in all, the participants seem to have become more confident, more aware, and more efficacious

as a result of their actual teaching experience, and all seem to be actively reflecting about the experience.

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study aimed to find out whether experience would change the PSE beliefs of English language teachers, investigating the PSE beliefs before and after practicum and after four years of teaching experience. The findings of the study indicated that the practicum and actual teaching experience have an impact on the PSE beliefs of English language teachers. This finding is in line with the findings of several studies in the literature (Atay, 2007; Swanson, 2013; Tavil, 2014).

One of the findings of the study was that the participants of the study, when they were PSETs, were thinking highly of their teaching abilities, and they were quite confident in their theoretical knowledge of English language teaching. Swanson (2013) found similar results and suggested that the participants in his study were highly confident in their teaching abilities at the beginning of the teacher education program. Balci et al. (2019) found out that the efficacy scores of junior students were significantly higher than those of other class levels. They have noted that the seniors turned out to have lower scores than other class levels, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Senior pre-service English language teachers have the chance of putting their knowledge into practice during practicum. Teaching practicum is the final step of pre-service teacher education through which the perceptions, beliefs of teacher candidates are fine-tuned, and through which pre-service language teachers become better equipped to cope with classroom realities in the future (Yuan & Lee, 2014). Considering that, it would not be wrong to expect changes in the PSE beliefs of pre-service teachers after practicum. The findings of the present study confirmed that practicum experience made a change in the PSE beliefs of PSETs. The resulting percentages of the changes in the ratings of the participants, including both increases and decreases, were 55% for efficacy in student engagement, 43% for efficacy in instructional strategies and 60% for efficacy in classroom management. One interesting finding was that the PSE beliefs regarding efficacy in instructional strategies did not change for most of the participants; 57% of the ratings fell into the “no-change” category. Of the three categories in the scale, efficacy in instructional strategies seems to be the only domain-specific category; efficacy in student engagement and classroom management might be generalized to teaching profession in general. It is interesting that such a finding might suggest that the practicum experience did not make much of a change in the PSE beliefs of the participants in terms of language teaching methods. This finding is in line with the findings of Hoang and Wyatt (2021); they concluded in their study that one-year practicum experience did not provide much growth in the domain-specific dimensions of English language teaching. Although there seems to be a limited impact of the practicum experience on the PSE beliefs

of the participants regarding Instructional Strategies, the finding might also suggest a strong confidence in the theoretical knowledge base on the part of the PSETs. The same finding, however, is not consistent with the findings of Atay (2007). Her study indicated a significant decrease in instructional strategies. In the present study, only two of the items in the category indicated a considerable decrease: efficacies regarding providing alternative explanations when students are confused and providing appropriate challenges for high-achieving students.

Another finding of the study was that the efficacy ratings of the participants revealed a significant change after three or four years of actual teaching experience. Although the individual ratings of the participants varied, most of the changes were found in the categories of instructional strategies and classroom management, 67% and 80% respectively. The changes in the PSE beliefs of the participants fell more into the “*increase*” category, especially for instructional strategies and classroom management. 45% of the participants increased the ratings for their PSE beliefs regarding instructional strategies. This result was also confirmed in the responses for the open-ended question; all the participants explained how they found their way through different techniques of teaching, trying lesson designs and activities and reflecting on them. We might conclude from this finding that three or four years of teaching experience empowered the English language teachers since they had the opportunity to synthesize theoretical knowledge and what they learned from the real practice of teaching. The findings indicated that they are still working on their teaching abilities to be more effective in student engagement, the scores of which indicated higher rates of decrease and no-change in the efficacy scores. Decreases were found to be more prevalent in the sub-category of Efficacy in Student Engagement (34%), which might be interpreted as a mismatch between expected PSE before any teaching experience and after three or four years of teaching experience.

The present study is not without limitations. Although the study is a longitudinal one, it is limited to eight participants. Thus, in further studies, it could be replicated with more participants to better understand and evaluate the relationships among the self-efficacy beliefs of the pre-service English language teachers before and after the practicum period and after four years of experience as EFL teachers.

Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate whether junior and senior teachers’ PSE beliefs to teach EFL vary across years. These studies are supportive and enlightening for future teachers in their profession rather than leaving them alone. It might be suggested that studies in this realm might trigger self-reflection on the part of both EFL teachers and teacher educators.

Despite the afore-mentioned limitations, it is clear from the present results that gaining a deeper insight into the self-efficacy beliefs of junior and senior EFL teachers, longitudinal studies should be implemented since they have a great impact on understanding the crucial roles of self-efficacy beliefs in teachers’ professional development. It is clear that such a deeper analysis will inform all stakeholders in teacher education

programs to understand the junior and senior teachers' self-efficacy beliefs to provide the necessary contexts for guiding the pre-service teachers to develop as qualified and confident professionals for their future careers.

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Declaración de intereses

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Información adicional

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